

## COVER PAGE

Project Title: 4Roots Sustainable Food System Network

Applicant Name: The 4R Foundation, Inc. DBA 4Roots

DUNS #: 0802231220000

### Project Summary:

The 4Roots Sustainable Food System Network develops local food solutions that reduce food waste, improve food security, and encourage sustainable farming practices. By building a network of local food partners – including growers, distributors, composters, and more – this program addresses challenges in our food system by closing the loop at a local level to create efficiencies that improve the health of our people and our planet. The 4Roots Food System Network was piloted in Orlando, Florida, and is now seeking funding to replicate its success in Atlanta, Georgia by working with identified partners to develop a more efficient and resilient local food system that improves the health of the community.

### Project Leader:

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Total Project Cost: \$100,000

Funding Requested: \$100,000

### Demonstration of Application Eligibility:

1. Application addresses SMM priority #2 (Strategies for Preventing Food Loss and Waste in Region 4) as described in Section I.A.
2. Application is for eligible activities under the statutory authority described in Section I.E.
3. Applicants is an eligible entity – a non-profit organization formed under Section 501©(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
4. Project takes place within EPA Region 4.
5. Application is not for any ineligible activities.
6. Application substantially complies with the application submission instructions and requirements described in Section IV of this solicitation.
7. Application is being submitted through grants.gov as specified in Section IV.A. of this announcement.

## **NARRATIVE WORK PLAN**

### **1. Project Summary and Priority Support**

#### **a. Project Description**

The 4Roots Sustainable Food System Network develops local food solutions that reduce food waste, improve food security, and encourage sustainable farming practices. By building a network of local food partners – including growers, distributors, composters, and more – this program addresses challenges in our food system by closing the loop at a local level to create efficiencies that improve the health of our people and our planet. It establishes new distribution channels that move more locally-grown nutrient-dense produce to both sales and donation outlets, ensuring that more local produce is actually harvested and distributed to local consumers, rather than going to waste in landfills. However, any food that is not fit for consumption is composted to create rich natural soil amendments, provided to local farmers to continue growing nutrient-dense produce. The 4Roots Food System Network was piloted in Orlando, Florida and is gaining recognition in other communities. The purpose of this proposal is to secure funding to replicate this program with identified partners in Atlanta, Georgia to develop a more efficient and resilient local food system that improves the health of the community.

#### **b. SMM Priorities**

The 4Roots Sustainable Food System Network is being developed as a strategy to prevent food loss and waste in Region 4. Food waste represents squandered resources (such as money, time, and labor), as well as a missed opportunity to feed hungry people. Given that 30-40% of all available food in the US goes uneaten, there is significant room for opportunity to work with stakeholders to develop systems-based solutions that not only reduce food waste, but also improve food security. By building a network of local food partners in Atlanta, Georgia – including growers, distributors, composters, and more – the 4Roots Food System Network will tackle food system challenges by developing collaborative local solutions that encourage new channels and markets for local produce – thereby reducing food waste and improving food security.

#### **c. Objectives**

The 4Roots Sustainable Food System Network has outlined the following objectives:

- Establish a “food system network”: 4Roots has identified a variety of partners in the Atlanta community that work on various pieces of the local food system. By bringing these partners together, this group will explore opportunities to improve efficiencies in local produce sourcing and distribution.
- Reduce food waste: 4Roots will work with both small and large farmers and distributors to establish a multi-layered approach to produce sourcing and distribution. This will ensure that more produce actually reaches an end consumer versus ending up in the landfill.

- Improve food security: By establishing more local distribution channels that serve both large and small farmers, this project will divert produce from landfills to ensure that it goes to actually feeding more people – with a particular emphasis on food desert neighborhoods.
  - Encourage sustainable farming practices: This project will include a composting partner that will connect with all of the other partners to capture any produce that is not fit for consumption. Instead of going to the landfill, this inedible produce will be composted to create rich soil amendments. This natural fertilizer will be shared with local farmers to encourage continued sustainable farming practices.
  - Develop a replicable model for other communities: This project will map the plan and progress onto a model that will serve as a resource for others who wish to replicate this project in their own communities.
- d. Scope of Work and Strategic Plan Linkage
- The 4Roots Sustainable Food Network System addresses the following goals and objectives as outlined in Section I.C.:
- Goal 1: Cleaner, healthier environment  
This project aims to reduce the amount of food waste that goes into landfills, thereby reducing greenhouse gases that are harmful for our environment. While most of the food that is diverted from landfills by this program will be redistributed to other sales and donation outlets, any food that is not fit for consumption will be composted to create natural soil amendments that revitalize the land for more sustainable food production.
  - Goal 2: More effective partnerships  
This project will establish a consortium of local food partners who will work together to develop more efficient local distribution channels for produce. These partners will define a communications plan that prioritizes accountability and transparency among the group to track progress, as well as an awareness campaign for the general public.
  - Goal 3: Greater certainty, compliance and effectiveness  
This project will work with a variety of partners at a systems level to evaluate current produce distribution channels, and identify opportunities to create new channels. The project will implement a model that streamlines communication between partners to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of getting produce from the grower to the consumer, thereby reducing wasted resources.

## **2. Project Partners, Outreach and Transferability**

### **a. Partnerships**

The 4Roots Sustainable Food System Network is being developed on the foundation of partnerships. While many organizations are engaging efforts to address our food system challenges, there are likely opportunities for greater synergy and impact through collaboration. By building a network of local food

partners – including growers, distributors, composters, and more – this project aims to tackle food system challenges by developing interdisciplinary local solutions that both reduce food waste and improve food security.

Having mapped and piloted a Sustainable Food System Network in Orlando, Florida, 4Roots has worked to identify partners who can help to replicate this model in Atlanta, Georgia. Each partner represents a different facet of the local food system, and will combine their diverse areas of expertise and relationships to facilitate these local food solutions.

FreshPoint is a large produce distributor that excels in logistics and transportation. FreshPoint is currently involved in the Sustainable Food System Network in Orlando, Florida, and is excited to support the replication of this model in other communities. FreshPoint will bring logistics and transportation expertise, as well as relationships with large growers and institutional buyers, to this project.

Georgia Organics is the oldest statewide nonprofit providing direct support to small and organic farmers. While FreshPoint brings relationships with large growers to the project, Georgia Organics will balance the spectrum by connecting smaller, organic farmers to this initiative. It will be important to include farmers of all sizes to match with the various distribution channels and market outlets.

Concrete Jungle is an Atlanta-based nonprofit that is dedicated to battling food insecurity by foraging, farming, and supporting food access across Georgia. This organization not only supports city-wide urban farming initiatives, but also works with a variety of community partners to facilitate the distribution of local produce via donation and sales outlets – with a special emphasis on food insecure neighborhoods.

Second Helpings is another Atlanta-based nonprofit that is dedicated to reducing hunger and food waste in the metro Atlanta area by rescuing healthy surplus food and distributing it to those in need. This organization has an established network of donation partners that will be essential for distributing surplus produce sourced from local growers – especially to food insecure neighborhoods.

Forager is an e-commerce platform that helps to eliminate inefficiencies related to sourcing and distributing surplus produce by conveniently connecting local produce to local markets via a technology platform. Forager will support the execution of the Sustainable Food System Network by bringing together all of the local food partners on a virtual platform that allows for seamless communication regarding produce availability.

Compost Now collects food scraps from residents and businesses to help them reduce waste and support local gardens. Compost Now will work with all of the local food partners within the Sustainable Food System Network to prevent food scraps from any partner or channel from going to waste in a landfill and contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, Compost Now will convert these food scraps into rich soil amendments that local farmers can use to grow more nutrient-dense produce for their community.

b. Outreach

The results of the 4Roots Sustainable Food System Network project will be communicated in several ways:

- ongoing progress will be shared via the social media and other marketing channels of 4Roots and other participating partners, and more detail will be shared with any interested stakeholders upon request.
- final results will support the development of a case study that can be promoted by partners shared via relevant food systems meetings and conferences

c. Transferability

The basis of this project was originally piloted in Orlando, Florida and will now be refined to transfer the model to Atlanta, Georgia. Upon completion of this project, challenges and successes will be mapped as part of a model to share across the region. This model will serve as a resource for others who wish to replicate this project in their own communities.

d. Letters

### 3. Project Sustainability

a. Project Alignment with Community Priorities

The City of Atlanta is committed to fostering cross-collaborative regional approaches to secure sustainability outcomes. One of the key initiatives to build resilience within the city is engaging partnerships to design and implement innovative solutions that rescue surplus food and reduce food waste. The 4Roots Sustainable Food System Network is closely aligned with this effort, as it is focused on convening local food partners to establish an innovative solution that reduces food waste and improves food security within the City of Atlanta.

b. Innovative Approaches

The 4Roots Sustainable Food System Network represents an innovative approach to strengthening local food systems in such a way as to reduce food waste, improve food security, and encourage overall sustainable food and farming practices. By bringing together interdisciplinary partners who work on various pieces of the food system – from growing to distributing to composting – this project will establish multi-layered distribution channels for farmers, distributors, and markets of all sizes. This will diversify the distribution portfolio, ensuring that more locally-grown produce reaches local consumers in one way or another rather than ending up in a landfill. For example, “ugly” produce that isn’t

fit for a particular market outlet will quickly be diverted to one of the other distribution channels and market outlets to prevent it from being wasted.

c. **Disproportionately Impacted Communities**

The City of Atlanta represents an urban community that disproportionately suffers from the environmental impacts of food waste and the pollution caused by food miles – and this is particularly true for more impoverished neighborhoods. This project will work with a variety of multidisciplinary partners to identify the scope of these negative impacts as they relate to food systems, and implement solutions to mitigate them.

**4. Project Tasks, Budget, and Measuring Progress**

a. Budget Description

1. Hire and Train Farm Network Manager – 4Roots Orlando
2. Hire and Train Marketing Coordinator – 4Roots Orlando
3. Establish Food System Network in Atlanta – ATL FNM
4. Evaluate Distribution Channels and Establish Roles of Each Partner – ATL FNM/4Roots Orlando
5. Develop and Implement Communication Strategy – Marketing Coordinator and 4Roots Orlando
6. Tracking and Measuring Produce Distributed via Program – 4Roots Orlando

b. Cost Estimates

- Farm Network manager – 10 hours per week @ \$38.46/hour
- Marketing Coordinator – 10 hours per week @ 19.23/hour
- 4Roots Orlando Team – 10 hours per week @ \$31.25/hour
- Travel – 8 visits from Orlando 4Roots team to Atlanta @ \$1,250/visit

c. Budget Table

PERSONNEL	Number	Wage	Hours/Yr	Total
ATL Farm Network Manager	1	\$38.46/hr	1040 hrs	\$39,998.40
Marketing Coordinator	1	19.23/hr	1040 hrs	\$19,999.20
4Roots Orlando	1	\$28.85/hr	1040 hrs	\$30,004
<b>FRINGE BENEFITS</b>				\$0
<b>CONTRACTUAL COSTS</b>				\$0
<b>TRAVEL</b>		<b>Cost/Trip</b>	<b>Trips/Year</b>	<b>Total</b>
4Roots Orlando travel to Atlanta		\$2,499.60	4	\$9,998.40
<b>EQUIPMENT</b>				\$0
<b>SUPPLIES</b>				\$0
<b>OTHER DIRECT COSTS</b>				\$0
<b>INDIRECT COSTS</b>				\$0

<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>				<b>\$100,000</b>
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**d. Outputs and Outcomes**

*i. Identify for each task what outputs and outcomes will be produced for your project as described in section 1.D; include quantitative targets. Describe your plan and approach for measuring progress towards achieving those expected project outcomes and outputs*

1. Hire and Train Farm Network Manager
  - a. Output – Trained professional in sustainable food system network in Atlanta
  - b. Outcome – 1 job created
2. Hire and Train Marketing Coordinator – 4Roots Orlando
  - a. Output – Trained marketing professional in sustainable food system awareness
  - b. Outcome – 1 job created
3. Establish Food System Network in Atlanta
  - a. Output – At least 15 partners, to include farmers, distributors, composters, NPO's onboarded to food system network
  - b. Outcome - Established a collaborative network of food system partners in greater Atlanta area
4. Evaluate Distribution Channels and Establish Roles of Each Partner
  - a. Output – 4 new distribution channels
  - b. Outcome - Reduction in food waste going to landfill
5. Develop and Implement Communication Strategy
  - a. Output – Marketing and awareness campaign plan
  - b. Outcome - Increased public awareness of benefits of reducing food waste
6. Tracking and Measuring Produce Distributed via Program
  - a. Output – Total volume of food recovered and total volume of finished compost
  - b. Outcome – Reduction in food waste to landfill, increased food access to areas in need and improved soil health as a result of regenerative composting.

**e. Anticipated Project Schedule**

*i. Timeline for tasks + subtasks described above and an estimate of how long it will take to complete each of these; schedule indicating completion dates of milestones that demonstrate that you can complete the project/goals within the two-year project period of performance.*

1. Hire and Train Farm Network Manager – 4Roots Orlando 6/1/2022-9/1/2022
2. Hire and Train Marketing Coordinator – 4Roots Orlando 6/1/2022-9/1/2022
3. Establish Food System Network in Atlanta – ATL FNM 9/1/2022-2/1/2023

4. Evaluate Distribution Channels and Establish Roles of Each Partner – ATL FNM/4Roots Orlando 2/1/2023-6/1/2023
  5. Develop and Implement Communication Strategy – Marketing Coordinator and 4Roots Orlando 6/1/2023-8/1/2023
  6. Tracking and Measuring Produce Distributed via Program – 4Roots Orlando 8/1/2023-5/30/2024
- f. Expenditure of Awarded Grant Funds
- To ensure that hiring and onboarding of new positions (ATL Farm Network Manager and Marketing Coordinator) are accomplished in a timely manner, positions will be listed and monitored on Workstream. The Farm Network Manager in Orlando has expertise in executing this type of project and is prepared to successfully train the new ATL Farm Network Manager. Partnerships with other organizations have already been established, and are ready to be activated when funding is received. Controls have been established to ensure success of this project in Orlando, and will be similarly implemented to ensure success of this project in Atlanta.

## **5. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance**

- a. Past Performance – Project Management
 

In March 2020, 4Roots launched a produce distribution program in response to local food insecurity exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. 4Roots sourced fresh, nutrient-dense produce from local farmers and worked with other community partners (schools, churches, neighborhood centers, and more) to donate this food to communities in need.

  - Visit Orlando: In December 2020, 4Roots received \$345,378 in funding from Visit Orlando to support sourcing and donating this produce to food insecure communities.
  - EPA: In May 2021, 4Roots received \$25,000 in funding from the EPA to support the purchase of surplus produce from local farmers at a discount rate to be sold at a marginal cost to partner organizations who distributed it to food insecure populations. The model was developed in such a way to generate enough revenue to support ongoing operations, thus sustaining the program beyond EPA's initial investment.
- b. Past Performance – Reporting
 

4Roots has adequately and timely reported on the progress of its food distribution programs as requested by funding partners. Although final reports are still forthcoming for these funding assistance agreements, all reports thus far have demonstrated consistent and meaningful progress on identified outputs and outcomes.

  - Visit Orlando: 4Roots has submitted quarterly reports to Visit Orlando, as requested.
  - EPA: 4Roots has participated in monthly progress calls and is submitting quarterly reports to the EPA, as requested.



c. Organizational Capability

The 4Roots team is dedicated to developing sustainable food systems, and it has demonstrated an impressive track record of working with partners to tackle food waste and food insecurity in Central Florida. Since launching its produce distribution program in the Spring of 2020, 4Roots has purchased 652,382 pounds of local produce, and has significantly increased the number of partners involved in the program – including farms of all sizes, distributors, community partners, and more. 4Roots has gained recognition for its efforts and is preparing to share best practices with other communities.